

War in Iraq Op-Ed

Friday, March 21 2003

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I believe that regardless of one's opinion of our actions in Iraq, it is now time to come together as a nation to support our men and women in uniform as they risk their lives far away from home. We need to show our support and compassion for our military personnel and their families during these difficult times.

Maine has already been touched by tragedy. We recently received the news that two of our sons had lost their lives in Iraq. My heart and prayers go out to those families, and I know that these sentiments are shared by our close-knit community in Maine. One of the wonderful things about our state is the sense of closeness we feel, and our shared identity as Mainers-I know that at difficult times such as these it will be an even greater comfort to all of those affected by the war to feel the support of our neighbors.

The President has taken us to Iraq because he believes that it will increase our national security, bring freedom from tyranny to the Iraqi people, and create a lasting democracy in Iraq. In the past, I have questioned the way we were proceeding with our policy toward Iraq, because I felt that international cooperation and pressure would bring about a more effective solution than unilateral military action. I share a profound devotion to this country, and a passionate desire to see us make the best choices for our safety and our future.

The judgment of our course has now been made by the President. Therefore, it is now paramount to ensure that our actions will be successful. But how are we to measure success? Success in this conflict cannot be achieved by military victory alone. In recent days, the President has stated several important goals beyond removing Saddam Hussein from power and removing weapons of mass destruction-I stand with the President in believing that this is part of our task, and I strongly agree that those broader goals must be met in Iraq. After Iraq, we must also provide for our military personnel once they return home, and as Ranking Member of the Veterans Subcommittee on Benefits, I will continue to work to make sure this happens.

A peaceful democratic regime needs to take hold in this ravaged country. The infrastructure of Iraq needs to be rebuilt and the political institutions must have our support as its people transition to democracy. Through Iraq, democracy and freedom must grow in the Middle East so that regimes like Saddam Hussein's cannot survive and so that the desire to obtain weapons of mass destruction or conduct terrorist attacks does not exist.

This must be our measure of success. We must unite as a country and make sure that we remain engaged abroad. We must continue not only to be the model of democracy, but a model of prosperity and caring for our own people. We must remain a model of freedom and free enterprise that the world will want to emulate.

I hope for a swift resolution to this conflict so that we can bring our young men and women home, so that we can ensure greater peace and security for the United States, and so that the people of Iraq and the entire Middle East region can enjoy a lasting peace.